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PEACH SCAB

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Peach scab (also known as freckles or black spot) occurs wherever its hosts are grown and where environmental conditions favor disease development. Prior to the development of control measures scab was regarded as a natural phenomenon on certain varieties of peach, Prunus persica (L.) Batsch., caused by exposure to the sun (2). Scab is caused by the fungus Cladosporium carpophilum Thum. (Fusicladium carpophilum (Thum) Oudem.), the imperfect state of Venturia carpophila Fisher, and affects fruit, leaves, and twigs of several Prunus species including plums, cherries, peaches, and apricots (1,2,3).

SYMPTOMS:

Symptoms are most obvious and diagnostic on the fruit (Fig. 1). Spots first appear as small (1 mm) greenish-black areas about four weeks after infection. Infection occurs ca. three weeks after petal fall (4). Spots are most prevalent on the stem end of the fruit. The lesions enlarge only slightly with age; however, with severe infection, spots coalesce and form large black areas. Lesions are superficial but normal development is prevented, resulting in misshapen fruit. Cracks may develop in the scab-like lesions, permitting invasion by decay fungi.

Leaf and twig lesions are also small and superficial, causing little direct injury. Twig cankers are, however, important from the standpoint of overwintering of the fungus.

Fig. 1. Peach scab on nectarine, Prunus persica (L.) Batsch. var. nectarina (Ait.) Maxim. DPI Photo No. 700549.

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CONTROL: As many twig cankers as possible should be removed by pruning. Trees should also be pruned to improve air circulation and fungicide penetration. Several fungicides are available for peach scab control.

Consult a county agricultural extension agent or the Florida Plant Disease Control Guide (4) for current recommendations.

SURVEY AND DETECTION: Look for fruit with small greenish-black scabby spots clustered on the stem end.

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